



How to soften the Heart

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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful





Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu,

We pray that this message reaches you
in good health and imaan.

On behalf of our AMAU Academy team, we would like
to present to you these compiled notes that we have
prepared to make your journey with us a lot easier.

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May Allah make our paths toward seeking
beneficial knowledge easy and kindle our hearts
with sincerity and gratefulness
towards Him.

Jazakumullahu Khayran



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Table of Contents

06	<i>Chapter One</i>	What is the Heart?
09	<i>Chapter Two</i>	Importance of Purifying the Heart
12	<i>Chapter Three</i>	Sicknesses of the Heart
15	<i>Chapter Four</i>	Hardness of the Heart
18	<i>Chapter Five</i>	Causes of the Hardness of the Heart
24	<i>Chapter Six</i>	Hardness of the Heart in the Sunnah
29	<i>Chapter Seven</i>	Hardness of the Heart in the Speech of the People of Knowledge
32	<i>Chapter Eight</i>	A Methodology for Softening the Heart
36	<i>Chapter Nine</i>	Books of Heart Softeners and Zuhd

Glossary



جل جلاله | Jalla Jalāluhu

Allah the Most Exalted



صلى الله عليه وسلم | Sallāllāhu Alayhi Wa Sallam

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him



رضي الله عنه | RadiAllahu `anhu

May Allah be pleased with him



رحمه الله | Rahimahullah

May Allah have mercy upon him

What Is the Heart?

Chapter One

In the Arabic language the heart is called al-Qalb, and this word has two linguistic meanings. The first of them refers to the purest and most noble of something. The second refers to turning/flipping something from one direction to another.



“The heart is the most important organ in our body.”

Nu'man b. Basheer رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said

- 1 **أَلَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ**

“Indeed, in the body, there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body will be sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body will be corrupt - and it is the heart.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 52 and Sahih Muslim 1599

Umm Salamah said:

- 2 **كَانَ أَكْثَرُ دُعَائِهِ: يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ**

“His i.e. the Prophet ﷺ most frequent du'a was: ‘O turner (muqallib) of the hearts, make my heart firm on your religion.’

Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3522

The heart is described as the place of reasoning but that does not mean the brain doesn't play a role in this. The Qur'an and Sunnah have many narrations which state that the heart is the one which thinks and reflects.

For example, Allāh ﷻ says:

- 3 **أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ**

"So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts."

Surah Al-Hajj: 46

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رحمته الله said:

- 4 **قيل: إن العقل في الدماغ؛ كما يقوله كثير من الأطباء، ونُقل ذلك عن الإمام أحمد، ويقول طائفة من أصحابه: إن أصل العقل في القلب، فإذا كَمُلَ انتهى إلى الدماغ. والتحقيق أن الروح - التي هي النفس - لها تعلق بهذا وهذا، وما يتَّصف من العقل به يتعلق بهذا وهذا، لكنَّ مبدأ الفكر والنظر في الدماغ، ومبدأ الإرادة في القلب. والعقل يراد به العلم، ويراد به العمل؛ فالعلم والعمل الاختياري أصله الإرادة، وأصل الإرادة في القلب، والمريد لا يكون مريداً إلا بعد تَصَوُّر المراد؛ فلا بد أن يكون القلب متصوراً فيكون منه هذا وهذا؛ ويبتدئ ذلك من الدماغ وآثاره صاعدة إلى الدماغ فمنه المبتدأ وإليه الانتهاء وكلا القولين له وجهٌ صحيح والله أعلم**

"It is said that reasoning takes place in the brain, as many doctors say. This was reported from al-Imām Aḥmad. A group of his companions said that the foundation of reasoning is in the heart, and when it is complete, it rises to the brain. The precise answer is that the soul - which is the nafs - has a connection to both [the heart and the brain], and that which is described as reasoning has a connection to both [the heart and the brain]. However, the beginning of thinking and reasoning is in the brain, and the beginning of willpower is in the heart. Reasoning refers to knowledge and it refers to action. Both knowledge and voluntary action originate in willpower, and the origin of willpower is the heart. A person cannot want something until they have an understanding of that which they want, so the heart must have the ability to understand, and so both come from it. This begins in the brain and its effects reach up to the brain, so this is the starting and ending place. Therefore both opinions have a valid interpretation and Allāh knows best."

Majmu' al-Fatawa 9/303-304

So this clarifies that it is the soul which is the missing link which modern medicine and science has not been able to understand.

Allāh says:

5

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۚ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

"They ask you about the soul. Say: 'The soul is from the affairs of my Lord and you have not been given knowledge except a little.'"

Surah Al-Isra: 85

The heart is the place of willpower, and these types of actions take place in the heart. Reasoning also requires willpower which shows that the heart is not just a muscle which pumps blood. Rather, it is the most important part of our body as described in the Quran, Sunnah and various Athar of the Salaf.

Importance of Purifying the Heart

Chapter Two

Allāh commanded the Prophet ﷺ to purify his heart:

وَتِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ

“And purify your thiyab”

Surah Al-Muddaththir: 4

Generally the word Thiyab means clothing, however it also has different meanings in the Arabic language. Ibn al-Qayyim said that the majority of the scholars of Tafseer from the early generations were of the opinion that the meaning here in this verse is the heart.

Nu'man ibn Basheer رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said

أَلَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ

“Indeed, in the body, there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body will be sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body will be corrupt - and it is the heart.”

Saheeh al-Bukhari 52 and Saheeh Muslim 1599

Ibn Rajab رضى الله عنه said explaining this hadeeth:

وفيه: إشارة إلى أن صلاح حركات العبد بجوارحه، واجتنابه للمحرّمات، واتّقاءه للشبهات، بحسب صلاح حركة قلبه؛ فإن كان قلبه سليماً ليس فيه إلا محبة الله ومحبة ما يحبّه الله، وخشية الله وخشية الوقوع فيما يكرهه - صَلَحَتْ حركات الجوارح كلّها، ونشأ عنها اجتناب المحرّمات كلّها، وتوقّي الشبهات حذراً من الوقوع في المحرّمات. وإذا كان القلب فاسداً قد استولى عليه اتباع هواه، وطلب ما يحبّه ولو كرهه الله؛ فَسَدَتْ حركات الجوارح كلّها، وانبعثت إلى كل المعاصي والمشتبهات، بحسب اتباع الهوى هو القلب، ولهذا يقال: القلب ملك الأعضاء، وبقية الأعضاء جنوده، وهم - مع هذا - جنود طائعون له، مُنْبِعِثُونَ في طاعته، وتنفيذ أوامره، لا يخالفونه في شيء من ذلك، فإن كان الملك صالحاً كانت هذه الجنود سالحة، وإن كان فاسداً كانت جنوده بهذه المثابة فاسدة، ولا ينفع عند الله إلا القلب السليم

"In [the ḥadeeth], there is an indication that the righteousness of the servant's movements with his limbs, and him keeping away from that which is forbidden, and him shielding himself from doubtful matters, is according to the righteousness of the movement of his heart. If his heart is sound and there is nothing in it but the love of Allāh and the love of that which Allāh loves, and fearing falling into what He hates, the movements of the limbs will all be sound, and keeping away from all forbidden things will stem from them, as well as shieling [himself] from that which is forbidden, out of caution, so as not to fall into that which is forbidden. As for if the heart is corrupt and has been conquered by following its desires and seeking what it loves, even if Allāh hates it, the movements of the limbs will all be corrupt, and all sins and doubtful matters will flow from them, according to the extent to which the heart follows desires. For this reason, it is said that the heart is the king of the parts of the body, and all other parts of the body are its soldiers. In addition, they are soldiers who are obedient to it, going out in obedience, and carrying out its commands. They do not oppose it in any of this. So, if this king is righteous, these soldiers will be righteous; and if this king is corrupt, these soldiers will be similarly corrupt. Nothing benefits in the sight of Allāh except a sound heart."

al-Hasan al-Basri رحمته الله said:

داوِ قلبَكَ؛ فَإِنَّ حَاجَةَ اللَّهِ إِلَى عِبَادِهِ صَلَاحُ قُلُوبِهِمْ

“Seek a medicine for your heart; for indeed Allāh's need (requirement) of his servants is the soundness of their hearts.”

Ibn Rajab said explaining this quote:

يعني: أَنَّ مرَادَهُ مِنْهُمْ ومطلوبُهُ صَلَاحُ قُلُوبِهِمْ، فلا صَلَاحَ للقلوبِ حَتَّى تستقرَّ فيها، معرفَةُ اللَّهِ، وعظمَتُهُ، ومحبَّتُهُ، وخشيَتُهُ، ومَهَابَتُهُ، ورجاؤُهُ، والتوكُّلُ عليه، وتمتلى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وهذا هو حقيقةُ التوحيدِ، وهو معنى لا إلهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، فلا صَلَاحَ للقلوبِ حَتَّى يكونَ إِلَهُهَا الذي تَأَلَّاهُ وتعرِفُهُ، وتُحِبُّهُ، وتَخْشَاهُ، هو اللَّهُ وحْدَهُ لا شريكَ لَهُ

“He means what Allāh wants from them and requires of them is the soundness of their hearts, for there is no righteousness for the hearts until knowing Allāh, His greatness, loving Him, fearing Him, venerating Him, hoping in Him, and relying upon Him firmly reside within it, and the heart is full of them. This is the reality of tawḥeed, and it is the meaning of _laa ilaaha il-Allāh_, for there is no righteousness for the hearts until their object of worship that they deify and know, love and fear, is Allāh, alone and with no partner.”

Jami' al-Uloom wa al-Hikam p.145

Sicknesses of the Heart

Chapter Three

Allāh tells us about the three types of heart in the Quran.

1 The Sound Heart

This heart is free of sickness, has submitted to Allāh, and longs to meet Allāh in the Hereafter.

Allāh ﷻ said:

①

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ * إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“On the Day in which no wealth or children will benefit * but only one who comes to Allāh with a sound heart.”

Surah Ash-Shu'ara: 88

2 The Dead Heart

This is the heart of the disbeliever which has been completely sealed.

Allāh ﷻ said

①

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ

“And not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allāh causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot hear those in the graves.”

Surah Fatir: 22

3 The Diseased Heart

This illness may reach the level of disbelief and true hypocrisy or lesser than that.

As for the sickness of the heart which intends hypocrisy and disbelief

Allāh ﷻ says:

①

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

“In their hearts is disease, so Allāh has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie [about their belief; and in another style of reading: because they used to disbelieve].”

Surah Al-Baqara: 10

Both the disbelievers and hypocrites are mentioned because the disbelievers used to disbelieve and the hypocrites used to lie that they believe.

The statement of Allāh ﷻ

②

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“There are some people who say: ‘We believe in Allāh and the Last day’ but they’re not believers”

Surah Al-Baqara: 9

Also among the illnesses of the heart are the illnesses of desire and weakness of faith.

Allāh ﷻ told us in the Qur'an:

3

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا

“O wives of the Prophet, you are not like anyone among women. If you fear Allāh, then do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech.”

Surah Al-Ahzab: 32

Hardness of the heart can be caused by hypocrisy, pride, showing off, thinking bad of Allāh and other illnesses. Purifying the heart of these illnesses is key to softening the heart. You can't soften your heart until you remove its illnesses, so one needs to study them first.

Allāh ﷻ also tells us that the Quran is a cure for the sickness of the heart:

4

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers.”

Surah Yunus: 57

Imam as-Sa'di رحمه الله said commenting on this Ayah:

5

هو هذا القرآن، شفاء لما في الصدور من أمراض الشهوات الصادرة عن الانقياد للشرع، وأمراض الشبهات القاذحة في العلم اليقيني، فإن ما فيه من المواعظ والترغيب والترهيب، والوعد والوعيد، مما يوجب للعبد الرغبة والرغبة. وإذا وجدت فيه الرغبة في الخير، والرغبة من الشر، وممتا على تكرار ما يرد إليها من معاني القرآن، أوجب ذلك تقديم مراد الله على مراد النفس، وصار ما يرضي الله أحب إلى العبد من شهوة نفسه. وكذلك ما فيه من البراهين والأدلة التي صرّفها الله غاية التصريف، وبيّنها أحسن بيان، مما يزيل الشبهة القاذحة في الحق، ويصل به القلب إلى أعلى درجات اليقين. وإذا صح القلب من مرضه، ورَقَلَ بأثواب العافية، تبعته الجوارح كلها، فإنها تصلح بصلاحه، وتفسد بفساده

“It is this Qur'an - a cure for what is in the hearts, whether it is the illness of desire that prevents submission to Allāh's legislation, or illnesses of the false notions and the doubts that are spread and smear a person's certain knowledge, since there is in the Qur'ān exhortation, encouragement, warning, and a threat and a promise, that causes the slave to hope and fear. If desire for good and fear of evil are found within a person, and they are developed through repeatedly going through that which is found on this subject in the Qur'ān, then it necessitates that they put what Allāh loves over what their soul wants. Similarly, the proofs which are found in the Qur'an which Allāh has explained in the clearest way, they remove the false notions which smear the truth and they take the heart to the highest level of certainty. And if the heart is healthy and amply clothed in wellness, then all of the limbs will follow. For they become sound because of its soundness and they are corrupted by its corruption.”

Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahman 2/717

By nourishing their soul, one gains the ability to control their desires. The Quran has answers for doubts and misconceptions. Through it, a person can repel doubts, confusion, misconceptions, and achieve the highest level of certainty.

Hardness of the Heart

Chapter Four

The hardness of the heart is one of the diseases that affect the heart. To get rid of it, you must address the other illnesses first i.e. Nifaq, doubts, confusion, desires, and so on.

Ibn Mandhooor رحمته الله said, defining hardness of the heart:

1 **القسوة في القلب، ذهاب اللين، والرحمة، والخشوع منه**
Hardness of the heart is the loss of softness, mercy, and humbleness from it.

Lisan Al Arab 15/180

The hardness of the heart is the loss of softness, mercy, humbleness and submissiveness. There are a lot of verses and narrations mentioned about the hardness of the heart, Its reasons, and the cure.

Al-Jahidh رحمته الله said:

2 **الْقَسَاوَةُ: وَهُوَ خُلُقٌ مُرَكَّبٌ مِنَ الْبُغْضِ وَالشَّجَاعَةِ وَالْقَسَاوَةِ؛ وَهُوَ التَّهَاقُوتُ بِمَا يَلْحَقُ الْغَيْرَ مِنَ الْأَلَمِ وَالْأَذَى**
Hardness [of the heart] is a way of behaving made up of hatred, toughness, and hardness. It is to belittle the pain and hardship that happens to others.

Tahdib Al Akhlaq 30

Al-Qāre رحمته الله said:

3 **هِيَ النُّبُوَّةُ عَنْ سَمَاعِ الْحَقِّ، وَالْمِيلُ إِلَى مَخَالَطَةِ الْخَلْقِ، وَقِلَّةُ الْخَشْيَةِ، وَعَدَمُ الْخُشُوعِ وَالْبُكَاءِ، وَكَثْرَةُ الْغَفْلَةِ عَنْ دَارِ الْبَقَاءِ**
It is turning away from hearing the truth, an inclination to mix with people [for no valid reason or benefit], a lack of fear [of Allāh], and a lack of submissiveness in worship and a lack of crying, as well as being heedless of the everlasting abode.

Mirqat Al Mashafat 4/1556

Anything that causes the heart to feel tough or a lack of mercy and empathy for others is part of the hardness of the heart.

Allāh ﷻ says in the Quran:

4 **ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنِّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنِّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنِّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ**

Then your hearts become hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allāh . And Allāh is not unaware of what you do.

Surah Al- Baqara: 74

The symptoms mentioned here are not accepting the truth and not having fear of Allāh. This was prominent in the definitions above as well.

The Prophet ﷺ mentions the reasons and the cure as well

5 «فَإِمَّا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بكَثْرَةِ سُؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ؛ فَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَإِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَدَعُوهُ»

For the only thing that destroyed those who were before you was their excessive questioning and their opposition to their prophets. So, if I command you something, do as much of it as you can; and if I prohibit you from something, abandon it."

Sahih Al Bukhari 7288

A major point to note is that the hardness of the heart comes from disobeying the Prophets. This shows that one can soften their heart by adhering and following the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ .

There are a number of examples in the Quran where the previous Prophets were disobeyed by their people and in return they got punished. For example, the story of the children of Israel and the cow.

Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

6 عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ صَخْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: "مَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْهُ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ، وَمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ، فَإِمَّا أَهْلَكَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَثْرَةُ مَسَائِلِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافُهُمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ."

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (ra): I heard the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) say, “What I have forbidden for you, avoid. What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can. For verily, it was only the excessive questioning and their disagreeing with their Prophets that destroyed [the nations] who were before you.”

40 Hadith of An Nawawi: 9

Causes of the Hardness of the Heart

Chapter Five

Distancing yourself from the Prophet ﷺ and opposing his Sunnah is a major cause of the heart becoming hard. Therefore, one of the greatest means of softening the heart is to submit to Allāh and follow the way of the Prophet ﷺ - to love his Sunnah and to revive it.

Allāh ﷻ says in the Quran:

1

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَاطُوا تَسْلِيمًا

"But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission."

Surah An-Nisa: 65

One of the ways to soften one's heart in times of difference is to bring the matter to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and find solutions within it.

Allāh ﷻ said:

2

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Say, [O Muhammad], 'If you love Allāh , then follow me - Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.'

Surah Al-i-Imran: 31

If one loves Allāh, they want to have a heart full of the love of Allāh. If it's full of what Allāh loves and has no sickness or hardness, the limbs will follow. If one wants a heart like that, they have to follow the prophet ﷺ.

Allāh also says:

3

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ ۖ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allāh loves the doers of good."

Surah Al-Maa'ida: 13

The symptoms here are deceit, turning away from the truth, peddling falsehood, and a lack of care about the religion.

Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

4

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

And [We cursed them] for their breaking of the covenant and their disbelief in the signs of Allāh and their killing of the prophets without right and their saying, "Our hearts are wrapped". Rather, Allāh has sealed them because of their disbelief, so they believe not, except for a few.

Surah An-Nisa: 155

Breaking the covenant of Allāh, committing major Sins (killing and speaking about Allāh without knowledge are mentioned here), and open disobedience are all causes of the hardness of the heart. Likewise, we can flip that and say sticking to the covenant and doing good deeds is a cause for softening the heart.

Abū Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said that the Prophet ﷺ said:

5

آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ وَإِذَا ائْتُمِنَ خَانَ

"Three are the signs of a hypocrite: when he speaks he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted with something, he betrays the trust."

Sahih Al Bukhari: 34

A Muslim can have some traits of hypocrisy, such as breaking promises while not making them a true hypocrite.

Allāh ﷻ said:

6

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allāh and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their heart hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient.

Surah Al Hadid: 16

The hardness of the heart comes from a lack of submissiveness and humility. Many Muslims are still far from the actual Sunnah and are upon the statements of some people whom they consider as Awliya.

Allāh ﷻ said:

7

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى * قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا * قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسَى

And whoever turns away from my remembrance will indeed have a depressed life, and we will raise him blind. * He will say, 'My Lord! Why have you raised me blind when I was able to see?' He will say, 'In this way my signs came to you, and you forgot them, and in this way, today you will be forgotten.

Surah Ta ha: 124-126

Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

8

لَوْ أُنزِلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْنَاهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ
الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

If we sent this Qur'ān upon a mountain, you would see it humbled and coming apart from the fear of Allāh. And these examples we put forth for mankind, so that they may reflect.

Surah Al-Hashr: 21

Abus-Sa'ood al-'Imaadí [d. 982AH] رحمه الله said:

9

أُرِيدَ بِهِ تَوْبِيخُ الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَى قَسْوَةِ قَلْبِهِ، وَعَدَمِ تَخَشُّعِهِ عِنْدَ تِلَاوَتِهِ، وَقِلَّةِ تَدَبُّرِهِ فِيهِ

What is intended by this is to rebuke man for the hardness of his heart and the lack of submissiveness when it is recited, and a lack of reflecting upon it.

Tafsīr Abī al-Su'ūd (8/233)

The hardness of the heart is caused by turning away from the Quran and not having submissiveness when it is recited. Having a strong connection to the Quran, pondering over it, reflecting on it, and being affected by the recitation are all signs of softening the heart.

Allāh ﷻ says in the Quran:

10

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

"Do they not travel on the earth [the wording here includes pondering over creation], so they may have hearts by which they understand, or ears by which they hear - for it is not the eyes which are blinded, but it is the hearts in the chests that are blinded."

Surah Al-Hajj: 46

The meaning of travelling here encompasses reflecting on the Ayat of Allāh. It doesn't necessarily mean getting up and travelling to a different country.

Allāh ﷻ also said:

11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O you who have believed, respond to Allāh and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allāh intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered."

Surah Al-Anfaal 24

As-Sa'dí رحمته الله said:

12

فَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تَرُدُّوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ أَوَّلَ مَا يَأْتِيكُمْ، فَيُحَالُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ إِذَا أَرَدْتُمُوهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ، وَتَخْتَلِفَ قُلُوبُكُمْ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ

So beware of rejecting the command of Allāh when it first comes to you, then something comes between you and it when you want to do it after that, then your hearts differ - for Allāh intervenes between a person and his heart.

Al-Anfal: 24 | pg, 179, Tafseer As-Sa'di

Allāh ﷻ says in the Quran:

13

يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالدِّينَ ءَامِنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

O you who believe answer the call of Allāh and His messenger when He calls you to that which brings you life.

Surah Al-Anfal: 24

14

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and Allāh has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allāh ? Then will you not be reminded?"

Surah Al-Jaathiya: 23

Imam ash-Shaafi'í رحمته الله said:

15

المِرَاءُ فِي الْعِلْمِ، يُقْسِي الْقُلُوبَ، وَيُورِث الضَّغَائِنَ

Arguing about knowledge hardens the heart and brings about rancor.

Al-Adab Ash-Shar'iyyah 1/202

Following desires and being argumentative, along with a lack of submission to Allāh, causes the heart to become hard. It relates to not accepting the truth and being careless about the limits and boundaries of Allāh.

Allāh ﷻ said:

16

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَتُذُنُونِي وَقَدْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moses said to his people, "O my people, why do you harm me while you certainly know that I am the messenger of Allāh to you?" And when they deviated, Allāh caused their hearts to deviate. And Allāh does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

Surah As-Saff: 5

Allāh ﷻ also said:

17

فَاسْتَقِمُّ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

"So remain on the right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allāh], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is Seeing of what you do."

Surah Hūd 112

Imam as-Sa’dí رحمته الله said:

18

أَمَرَ نَبِيَّهٖ مُحَمَّدًا ﷺ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمُوا كَمَا أُمِرُوا، فَيَسْلُكُوا مَا شَرَعَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الشَّرَائِعِ، وَيَعْتَقِدُوا مَا أَخْبَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْعَقَائِدِ الصَّحِيحَةِ، وَلَا يَزِغُوا عَنْ ذَلِكَ يَمَنَةً وَلَا يَسْرَةً، وَيَدُومُوا عَلَى ذَلِكَ، وَلَا يَطْغَوْا بِأَنْ يَتَجَاوَزُوا مَا حَدَّهُ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مِنَ الْإِسْتِقَامَةِ

Allāh commanded his Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and those believers with him to remain steadfast as they were commanded, so they stick to the legislation which Allāh revealed, and they hold the sound beliefs that Allāh informed them of, and they do not deviate from this left or right, and they remain continuously upon that, and they do not transgress by going over the limits which Allāh established for them of steadfastness.

Hūd 112 | Tafseer As-Sa’di

Hardness of the Heart in the Sunnah

Chapter Six

Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

1

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ إِذَا أَذْنَبَ كَانَتْ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءٌ فِي قَلْبِهِ فَإِنْ تَابَ وَنَزَعَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ صُقِلَ قَلْبُهُ فَإِنْ زَادَ زَادَتْ فَذَلِكَ الرَّأْيُ الَّذِي ذَكَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ {كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ}

"Indeed the believer when he sins, there is a black dot [placed] upon his heart. If he repents, gives up the sin, and seeks forgiveness, his heart will be polished. If he continues, this continues, until his heart is stained with this mark which Allāh, mighty and majestic, mentioned in the Qur'ān: 'No, rather the stain has covered their hearts because of what they used to earn."

Sunan ibn Majah 4244

Al-Muḥaasibí رحمته الله said:

2

اعْلَمْ أَنَّ الذُّنُوبَ تُورِثُ الْغَفْلَةَ، وَالْغَفْلَةُ تُورِثُ الْقَسْوَةَ، وَالْقَسْوَةُ تُورِثُ الْبُعْدَ مِنَ اللَّهِ، وَالْبُعْدُ مِنَ اللَّهِ يُورِثُ النَّارَ، وَإِنَّمَا يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي هَذَا الْأَحْيَاءُ، وَأَمَّا الْأَمْوَاتُ فَقَدْ أَمَاتُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِحُبِّ الدُّنْيَا

Know that sins bring about heedlessness, and heedlessness brings about hardness [of the heart], and hardness [of the heart] brings about being far from Allāh, and being far from Allāh brings about [punishment in] the Fire. The only ones who think about this are those who are [spiritually] alive. As for the [spiritually] dead, they have killed themselves with the love of this world.

Risala Al Murshideen p.155

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak رحمته الله said in some lines of poetry:

3

رَأَيْتُ الذُّنُوبَ تُمِيتُ الْقُلُوبَ *** وَقَدْ يُورِثُ الذُّلَّ إِدْمَانُهَا
وَتَرَكْتُ الذُّنُوبَ حَيَاةَ الْقُلُوبِ *** وَخَيْرٌ لِنَفْسِكَ عِصْيَانُهَا

I saw that sins kill the hearts; and that disgrace may come from continually doing them,
and that leaving sin is the life of the hearts; and that it is better for your soul that you disobey it

The Robes of the Muslim woman, by Shaykh Al Albani 1/163

It is important to pay attention to the role of heedlessness and Sin. A person may be going through their life without ever caring about the state of their heart, and this is from the major causes of the hardness of the heart.

Al-Khaṭṭaabí رحمته الله said:

4

إِنَّمَا ذَمَّهُمْ لِاشْتِغَالِهِمْ بِمُعَالَجَةِ مَا هُمْ فِيهِ عَنْ أَمْرِ دِينِهِمْ، وَذَلِكَ يُفْضِي إِلَى قَسْوَةِ الْقَلْبِ
He rebuked them simply because they became busy with fixing their immediate affairs over their religion, and this is what leads to hardness of the heart.

Fayd Al Qadeer 4/607

Ibn-ul-Qayyim رحمته الله said:

5

"متى رأيت القلب قد تَرَحَّلَ عنه حبُّ الله والاستعدادُ لِقَائِهِ، وحلَّ فيه حبُّ المخلوق، والرضا بالحياة الدنيا، والطُمَأْنِينَةُ بِهَا، فَأَعْلَمَ أنه قد خُسِفَ بِهِ"

Whenever you see that love of Allāh has left the heart, along with preparedness for meeting him, and there has settled within it love of creation and contentment with the life of this world, and tranquility within it, know that it has been caused to sink.

Bada'i Al Fawaid 3/743

He also said:

6

شَغَلُوا قُلُوبَهُمْ بِالدُّنْيَا، وَلَوْ شَغَلُوهَا بِاللَّهِ وَالِدَارِ الْآخِرَةِ، لَجَآلَتْ فِي مَعَانِي كَلَامِهِ وَآيَاتِهِ الْمَشْهُودَةِ، وَرَجَعَتْ إِلَى أَصْحَابِهَا بِغَرَائِبِ الْحِكْمِ وَطَرَفِ الْفَوَائِدِ. إِذَا غُذِيَ الْقَلْبُ بِالتَّذَكُّرِ، وَسُقِيَ بِالتَّفَكُّرِ، وَنُقِيَ مِنَ الدَّغْلِ، رَأَى الْعَجَائِبَ وَأُلْهِمَ الْحِكْمَةُ... إِذَا زَهَدَتْ الْقُلُوبُ فِي مَوَائِدِ الدُّنْيَا، قَعَدَتْ عَلَى مَوَائِدِ الْآخِرَةِ بَيْنَ أَهْلِ تِلْكَ الدَّعْوَةِ، وَإِذَا رَضِيَتْ بِمَوَائِدِ الدُّنْيَا فَاتَتْهَا تِلْكَ الْمَوَائِدُ

They made their hearts busy with the worldly life, and if they had made them busy with Allāh and the Hereafter, they would have roamed freely through his speech and his signs which are witnessed; and they would have come back to them with the rarest of wisdom and the utmost benefits. If the heart is nourished with remembrance and its thirst quenched with reflection, and it is purified from corruption, it sees the most wondrous of things and its wisdom is revealed to him...If the hearts abstain from the tables spread with the nourishment of this world, they sit down to feast upon the tables spread with the nourishment of the Hereafter, among the people who respond to this invitation; and if they are content with the tables spread with the nourishment of this world, they lose those others

Bariqa Mahmoodiyah 4/97

Being busy and tied to the goals of the worldly life can also be a harden the heart and the cure for that is to focus on the Hereafter.

Abdullāh ibn Mas'ood رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

7

مَنْ جَعَلَ الْهُمُومَ هَمًّا وَاحِدًا هَمَّ الْمَعَادِ كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ هَمَّ دُنْيَاهُ وَمَنْ تَشَعَّبَتْ بِهِ الْهُمُومُ فِي أَحْوَالِ الدُّنْيَا لَمْ يُبَالِ اللَّهُ فِي أَيِّ أَوْدِيَّتِهِ هَلَكَ

Whoever focuses all his concerns on one thing, the Hereafter, Allāh will relieve him of worldly concerns; but whoever has disparate concerns scattered among a number of worldly issues, Allāh will not care in which of its valleys he dies.

Ibn Majah 4106

This is something which is attested to extensively throughout the Quran, the Sunnah, and the speech of the Salaf.

‘Aishah said:

8

< قَدِمَ نَاسٌ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَالُوا: أَتُقَبِّلُونَ صِبْيَانَكُمْ فَقَالَ: «نَعَمْ». فَقَالُوا: لَكِنَّا وَاللَّهِ مَا نُقَبِّلُ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «وَأَمْلِكُ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ نَزَعَ مِنْكُمْ الرَّحْمَةَ». وَقَالَ ابْنُ مُمَيَّرٍ: «مِنْ قَلْبِكَ الرَّحْمَةُ».

There came a few desert Arabs to Allāh's Messenger ﷺ and said, "Do you kiss your children?" He said, "Yes." They said, "But by Allāh, we do not kiss our children." Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said, "Then what can I do if Allāh has deprived you of mercy?" Ibn Numair said, "...your heart of mercy.

Sahih Al Bukhari 5998

Al-Munāwī رحمه الله said:

9

< "لَأَنَّ الرَّحْمَةَ تَتَخَطَّى إِلَى الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَى الْغَيْرِ، وَكُلُّ مَنْ رَحِمْتَهُ رَقَّ قَلْبُكَ لَهُ فَأَحْسَنْتَ إِلَيْهِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يُعْطِ حَظَّهُ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ غُلِظَ قَلْبُهُ وَصَارَ فَظًّا، لَا يَرِقُّ لِأَحَدٍ وَلَا لِنَفْسِهِ، فَالشَّدِيدُ يَشْدُو عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَيَعْسُرُ وَيَضِيقُ، فَهُوَ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ فِي تَعَبٍ، وَالْخَلْقُ مِنْهُ فِي نَصَبٍ، مَكْدُوحُ الرُّوحِ، مُظْلَمُ الصَّدْرِ، عَابِسُ الْوَجْهِ، مُنْكَرُ الطَّلَعَةِ، ذَاهِبًا بِنَفْسِهِ تِيهًا وَعَظْمَةً، سَمِينُ الْكَلَامِ، عَظِيمُ النِّفَاقِ، قَلِيلُ الذِّكْرِ لِلَّهِ وَلِلدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ، فَهُوَ أَهْلٌ لَأَنْ يَسْخَطَ عَلَيْهِ، وَيُغَاضِبَهُ لِيُعَاقِبَهُ

Because mercy leads on to excellent treatment of others. Whoever you are merciful to, your heart becomes soft towards them and so you treat them in an excellent way. Whoever has not been given their portion of mercy, their heart becomes tough, and the person becomes harsh - they have no softness towards anyone, not even themselves. The harsh person is harsh to themselves and makes things difficult and is constricted. In himself, he is weary, and creation are fatigued because of him. His soul is worn out, his chest is in darkness, his face bears a frown, and his appearance is horrible. He carries himself with haughtiness and pride, his speech is thick, he has a great deal of hypocrisy, and rarely remembers Allāh and the final abode - He is deserving of Allāh being angry with him, and Allāh makes him infuriated in order to punish him

Fayd Al Qadeer 1/689

Here we learn the importance of empathy, mercy, and care for others. Without this, the heart becomes hard. This is something that a person has to take themselves to account for. The means of achieving softness of the heart in regards to this is what is recorded from the Prophet ﷺ in the ḥadeeth of Abūd-Dardaa رحمه الله:

10

أَتُحِبُّ أَنْ يَلِينَ قَلْبُكَ وَتُذَرِكَ حَاجَتَكَ؟ إِرْحَمْ الْيَتِيمَ وَامْسَحْ رَأْسَهُ وَأَطْعِمْهُ مِنْ طَعَامِكَ يَلِينْ قَلْبُكَ وَتُذَرِكَ حَاجَتَكَ

Would you love for your heart to soften and for your need to be met? Be merciful to the orphan, wipe his head, and feed him from your food, your heart will be softened and your need will be met.

Reported by Tabarani | Authentic

Just sending money to a charity won't soften the heart in the same way. You have to personally find an orphan and make a personal effort to show them care. Feed them the same food that you eat and take care of their finances.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

11

مَا آمَنَ بِي مَنْ بَاتَ شَبَعَانَ وَجَارُهُ جَائِعٌ إِلَى جَنْبِهِ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ بِهِ

“He has not believed in me - the one who goes to sleep full and his neighbor is hungry next to him, and he knows this.”

Al-Bazaar, at-Ṭabarānī and others

Al-Munaawī رحمه الله said:

12

المرادُ نفيُ الإيمانِ الكاملِ، وذلكَ لأنَّه يَدُلُّ على قسوةِ قلبه، وكثرةِ شُحِّه، وسقوطِ مروءتِه، وعظيمِ لُؤمِه، وخُبثِ طَوِيَّتِه

The meaning is to negate complete faith [i.e., he is not a disbeliever but not a person of complete faith]. This is because it indicates the hardness of his heart, and how miserly he is, his lack of manners, his great ignobility, and the evil of his conscience.

Fayd Al Qadeer 5/520

From the Du‘a of the Prophet ﷺ:

13

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من العجز والكسل

O Allāh, I seek refuge with you from inability and laziness.

Sahih Al Bukhari 2823

Al-Munaawī رحمه الله said:

14

الكسل.. والفُتُورُ عن القيامِ بالطاعاتِ الفرضيةِ والنفليةِ الذي من ثَمَرَاتِه قسوةُ القلبِ

Laziness...and slackening in doing obligatory and voluntary acts of obedience, among the fruits of which is the hardness of the heart.

Fayd Al Qadeer 1/278

From the major means to soften the heart are Du'a, working hard and not feeling helpless, and the prayer.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

15

اُحْرِضْ عَلَى مَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَاسْتَعِزْ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْجِزْ

Be keen for what benefits you, seek the help of Allāh, and do not feel helpless.

Sunan ibn Majah 79

Hardness of the Heart in the Speech of the People of Knowledge

Chapter Seven

Al-Munāwī رحمته الله said:

- ① **طُولُ الْأَمَلِ غُرُورٌ وَخِدَاعٌ، إِذْ لَا سَاعَةً مِنْ سَاعَاتِ الْعَمْرِ إِلَّا وَيُمْكِنُ فِيهَا انْقِضَاءُ الْأَجَلِ، فَلَا مَعْنَى لِطُولِ الْأَمَلِ الْمُورِثُ قِسْوَةَ الْقَلْبِ، وَتَسْلِيْطَ الشَّيْطَانِ، وَرُبَّمَا جَرَّ إِلَى الطَّغْيَانِ**
Ṭool-ul-'Amal (behaving as though you will live for a long time) is deception and deceit, since there is no moment from the moments of life except that it is possible that the person's time will come. So there is no meaning to behaving as though you will live for a long time, which causes the hardness of the heart and the shayṭaan to overpower you, and perhaps leads a person to going beyond the limits."

Fayd Al Qadeer

The solution to this is what ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said:

- ② **إِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرُ الْمَسَاءَ ، وَإِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرُ الصَّبَاحَ**
When you wake up, don't wait (or expect) for the evening to come; and when you reach the evening, don't wait (or expect) for the morning to come.

Sahih Al Bukhari 6416

Abū Sa‘eed al-Khaadimī رحمته الله said:

- ③ **وَفِي كَثْرَةِ النَّوْمِ ضِيَاعُ الْعَمْرِ، وَفَوْتُ التَّهَجُّدِ، وَبِلَادَةِ الطَّبْعِ، وَقِسْوَةُ الْقَلْبِ، وَفِي كَثْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ قِسْوَةُ الْقَلْبِ**
In a great deal of sleeping there is a waste of life, losing out on _tahajjud_, being sluggish in nature, and hardness of the heart. Likewise in a great deal of eating there is hardness of the heart.

Bariqa Mahmudiyyah 4/97

Al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyaad رحمته الله said:

- ④ **ثَلَاثُ خِصَالٍ تُقْسِي الْقَلْبَ: كَثْرَةُ الْأَكْلِ، وَكَثْرَةُ النَّوْمِ، وَكَثْرَةُ الْكَلَامِ**
Three attributes harden the heart: a great deal of eating, a great deal of sleeping, and a great deal of speech.

Ihya Uloom Al Deen

The solution is to only eat what you need to be healthy, to set yourself an amount of sleep each day that you do not go over (many of the scholars said between 6 and 8 hours, including a nap in the day), and to think about what you say before you say it.

Excessive laughter can also lead to the hardness of the heart as Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ advised him:

- ⑤ **وَلَا تُكْثِرِ الضَّحْكَ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الضَّحِكِ تَمِيتُ الْقَلْبَ**
"Do not laugh excessively, for laughing excessively deadens the heart."

Sunan ibn Maja: 4193

Al-Munāwī رحمه الله said:

6 مُخَالَطَةُ غَيْرِ التَّقِيِّ، يَخِلُّ بِالدِّينِ، وَيُوقِعُ فِي الشُّبْهِ وَالْمَحْظُورَاتِ،...إِذْ لَا تَخْلُو عَنْ فَسَادٍ،
إِمَّا بِمُتَابَعَةٍ فِي فِعْلٍ، أَوْ مُسَامَحَةٍ فِي إِغْضَاءٍ عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ، فَإِنْ سَلِمَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ - وَلَا يَكَادُ - فَلَا
تُخْطِئُهُ فِتْنَةُ الْغَيْرِ بِهِ

Keeping company with someone who is not righteous takes away from a person's religion, and causes them to fall into false notions and forbidden things...since it is not free of corruption, either by following [the one who is not righteous] in his actions, or appeasing him by closing your eyes to his evil. If the person is saved from this - and this is almost never the case - he will not miss out on causing others fitnah through his actions.

Faidh al-Qadeer (6/525)

Ibn-al-Qayyim رحمه الله said:

7 إِنَّ فُضُولَ الْمُخَالَطَةِ هِيَ الدَّاءُ الْعِضَالُ، الْجَالِبُ لِكُلِّ شَرٍّ، وَكَمْ سَلَبَتْ الْمُخَالَطَةُ
وَالْمُعَاشَرَةُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ، وَكَمْ زَرَعَتْ مِنْ عَدَاوَةٍ، وَكَمْ غَرَسَتْ فِي الْقَلْبِ مِنْ حَزَازَاتٍ،
تَزُولُ الْجِبَالُ الرَّاسِيَاتُ، وَهِيَ فِي الْقُلُوبِ لَا تَزُولُ، فَفُضُولُ الْمُخَالَطَةِ فِيهِ خَسَارَةٌ
الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَإِنَّمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلْعَبْدِ أَنْ يَأْخُذَ مِنَ الْمُخَالَطَةِ بِمِقْدَارِ الْحَاجَةِ

Keeping company unnecessarily is the chronic disease which brings about every evil. How many blessings have been taken away by mixing and association, how much enmity has been sowed, and how much rancor has been planted in the heart that would cause firm mountains to disappear, yet it does not disappear from the heart. So, within unnecessary mixing there is the loss of this world and the next. Rather, it is only befitting for a person to take to associating with others to the extent of their need.

Bada'i'

Keeping company which hardens the heart is of two types:

- (1) Unnecessarily associating, mixing, and keeping company with people for the sake of it. There is no benefit for you in the deen.
- (2) Keeping company with those who are not righteous (and that is in itself unnecessary).

A Methodology for Softening the Heart

Chapter Eight

1 Being Belittled by Others

The arrogant person deeply desires people to raise him and put him up; however, the opposite is what actually happens. Eventually, he is belittled by the people, and this is the way Allāh ﷻ does things. He raises the one who humbles himself, and lowers the one who is arrogant.

2 Allāh ﷻ Prevents Them from Seeing Reality

The arrogant person is not able to benefit from the signs of Allāh, such as the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

1 سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

“I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right; and if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. And if they see the way of consciousness, they will not adopt it as a way; but if they see the way of error, they will adopt it as a way. That is because they have denied Our signs and they were heedless of them.”

Surah Al-A'raf: 146

So when the truth comes to the arrogant person, he is not able to recognise it. If he is showered with evidence all around him, he is still blind from seeing the truth and accepting it.

Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

2 لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نُضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“If We had sent down this Qur’ān upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and split from fear of Allāh. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.”

Surah Al-Hashr: 21

If this Qur'an was revealed upon the mountains it would have moved it. However, the heart of the arrogant person does not move when it hears the words of Allah.

Salamah ibn Al-Akwa رضى الله عنه said that the Prophet ﷺ said:

3 لَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَذْهَبُ بِنَفْسِهِ حَتَّىٰ يُكْتَبَ فِي *الْجَبَّارِينَ فَيُصِيبُهُ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ

“A man shall remain exalting himself until he is written among the tyrants, so that he suffers from their afflictions.”

Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2000 || Grade: Da'if (Darussalam)

* The likes of Fir'aun, Hamaan

The steps one needs to take in order to soften one’s heart:

1 Making Du’a

Asking Allāh ﷻ to renew the faith in your heart and asking for sincere repentance.

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

1

إِنَّ الْإِيمَانَ لَيَخْلَقُ فِي جَوْفِ أَحَدِكُمْ كَمَا يَخْلَقُ الثَّوبُ ،
فاسألوا الله تعالى : أَنْ يُجَدِّدَ الْإِيمَانَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

Indeed, faith wears out in the heart of one of you like your clothing wears out, so ask Allāh, the Exalted, to renew the faith that is in your hearts.

Using the supplications which the Prophet ﷺ taught:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذَنْبِي كُلَّهُ ، دِقَّةً وَجِلَّةً ، وَأَوَّلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ ، وَعَلَانِيَتَهُ وَسِرَّهُ

O Allāh, forgive me all of my sins, the small and great of them, the first and last of them, and the seen and hidden of them

Asking Allāh ﷻ to guide when you say to Allāh:

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Guide us to the straight path.

Sahih Muslim: 1/350

2 Repentance, in its most complete sense.

Repentance consists of 4 steps:

- 1 Recognizing and admitting the Sin
- 2 Feeling sorry for what has passed
- 3 Intending never to do it again
- 4 Making up for what you have done

3 Specific steps to soften the heart.

- 1 Striving for sincerity and keeping away from showing off
- 2 Striving to be truthful, trustworthy, honest, and keeping away from hypocrisy, lying, deception, breaking promises, and similar Sins
- 3 Developing humility and not looking down upon others
- 4 Learning Islam, particularly Allāh's names and attributes
- 5 Accepting when you are wrong and not getting hasty

- 6 Directing your fear and hope towards Allāh, rather than His creation
- 7 Controlling your desires through loving Allāh and loving what Allāh loves
- 8 Developing empathy and mercy for others and dedicating time and attention to them
- 9 Following the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ
- 10 Leaving as many Sins as possible, both major and minor
- 11 Not laughing and joking too much
- 12 Reading and understanding the Quran on a regular basis
- 13 Thinking and reflecting about the signs of Allāh
- 14 Answering the call of Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ immediately
- 15 Putting all your energy and focus into the Hereafter and only taking from the worldly life that which you need
- 16 Avoid excess eating, drinking, and sleeping
- 17 Thinking and reflecting about the signs of Allāh
- 18 Always remembering death
- 19 Being watchful of what you say
- 20 Not being excessively social and having bad influences
- 21 Reading the biographies of the Salaf of this Ummah

Books of Heart Softeners and Zuhd

Chapter Nine

- 1 Diseases of The Heart and its Cures *by Ibn Taymiyyah*
- 2 Disturber of the Hearts *by Ibn-al-Jawzi*
- 3 Disciplining the Soul *by Ibn-al-Jawzi*
- 4 Awakening From the Sleep of Heedlessness *by Ibn-al-Jawzi*
- 5 The Disease and the Cure *by Ibn-al-Qayyim*
- 6 Az-Zuhd *by Ibn-al-Qayyim*
- 7 Explanation of Al-Qasidah Al-Haiyah *by Abdur Razzaq ibn Abdul Muhsin al-Abbad al-Badr*
- 8 A Treatise in Condemnation of the Hardness of the Heart *by Ibn Rajab*
- 9 The Book of Heart Softeners *by Ibn ‘Uthaymeen*
- 10 *Ibn Taymiyyah's* Essay on the Heart
- 11 The Dunya and its Reality *by Ibn-al-Qayyim*
- 12 Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qasidin *by Ibn Qudaamah*
- 13 Captured Thoughts *by Ibn-al-Jawzi*
- 14 Seeds of Admonishment and Reform *by Ibn-al-Jawzi*
- 15 The Exquisite Pearl *by as-Sa'di*
- 16 Preparing for the Day of Judgment *by Ibn Hajar*
- 17 Weeping From the Fear Of Allāh *by Husayn Al Awaayishah*



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